

Restricting SNAP does not Lead to Better Nutrition

Opposition to HB 343 (Cain)

Houston Food Bank (HFB) serves an 18-county region¹ by distributing food through community partners and providing additional programs to support people in the community and help them achieve food security and stability. Through our network we are distributing approximately 800,000 pounds of food per day and from March to September of 2020 alone, over 3.8 million households received food. Despite these increased efforts, food insecurity persists.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), on the other hand, provides a greater return on investment than any other hunger fighting initiative.² It helps ensure consistent nutrition for low-income individuals and provides nine meals for every one a food bank can offer. SNAP has also been found to enhance the health of beneficiaries as it supplements a household's food budget and provides access to healthier food options that would not be possible with a low-income household's food budget alone.

Methods to increase healthy food access of SNAP households include:³

- increasing SNAP benefits to ensure households can purchase more nutritious items that tend to be more expensive
- reducing food deserts so families have access to nutritious food
- increasing retailer participation in SNAP
- increasing nutrition education resources

Research **does not** suggest that restricting the food choice of SNAP beneficiaries increases their health outcomes, primarily because this doesn't create the additional means or access to healthy foods that create barriers to eating it.⁴

While HB 343 is intended to improve the health of beneficiaries this policy change would instead serve only to increase the administrative costs and complexity of the program for retailers, and federal and state governments who have to identify, evaluate, and monitor changes in existing and new food products. Therefore, we are asking you to vote again HB 343.

For more information, contact: Katherine Byers, Ph.D., Government Relations Officer
kbyers@houstonfoodbank.org | 713-480-3937

¹The Houston Food Bank, in collaboration with community Partners, serves an 18-county region of Texas including: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Ft. Bend, Harris, Liberty, San Jacinto, Trinity, Walker, and Waller. Through Brazos Valley Food Bank we serve the counties of Brazos, Burleson, Grimes, Madison, Montgomery, and Washington. Through Galveston County Food Bank we serve Galveston and through Montgomery County Food Bank we serve Montgomery County.

² Bolen, E. and Wolkomir, E. May 28, 2020. SNAP Boosts Retailers and Local Economies. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.; Food Research and Action Center. December 2017. The Role of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Improving Health and Well-Being; Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. 2019. *Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*. Available at: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

³ Food Research and Action Center. 2013. *A Review of Strategies to Bolster SNAP's Role in Improving Nutrition as well as Food Security*; Morse, A and Morgan, R. April, 2017. *Improving the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*. National Conference of State Legislatures. 25(15).

⁴; Feeding Texas. 2019. *Policy Brief: Maintaining Choices for SNAP Recipients*; Wahowiak, L. 2015. *SNAP restrictions can hinder ability to purchase healthy food: Stigma, payment options among issues*. The Nation's Health: A Publication of the American Public Health Association.